CULTURAL GUIDE
TO GERMANY

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by Jean German, 1978

revised by Jennifer Demmert, 1995
revised by Heidi Whitesell, 2002

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FOREWORD

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INTRODUCTION

In many respects, German culture resembles our own. Germans and Americans live and dress similarly. They enjoy many of the same leisure activities, aspire to similar goals, and have a similar standard of living. Also, a predominantly Christian heritage has influenced the development of both cultures.

Yet, Germany's physical location, dense population, and national history are very different from their American counterparts. The country lies between Denmark, Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. It is slightly smaller than Montana, yet is home to approximately 80 million people. Throughout Europe, more than 95 million people speak German as their first language. Germany has witnessed, and suffered in, every major European conflict since the time of Napoleon.

Historically, the German nation, in spite of its relatively small geographic size, has played a prominent role in the international scene. The German experience has been one of contrasts—war and peace, poverty and prosperity, unity and division, victory and defeat. Until recently only war in defense of the nation was permitted. Now the federal constitution allows the use of the Germany military in any action, but only with a United Nations mandate. To avoid tremendous poverty disasters similar to those of 1923 and 1948, the government consistently keeps inflation rates low. Germany has enjoyed the praise of other nations; it has also lived with the wrath and scorn of the world. Despite the German experience with death, suffering, and destruction, one can still observe the Germans' ability to celebrate life intensely.

The two Germanys were reunited on October 3, 1990, after being divided in 1945 upon the conclusion of World War II. The Berlin Wall was erected on August 13, 1961, but was torn down on November 9, 1989. Although history discloses the evils of leadership and government in Germany, today the nation has developed into a

parliamentary democracy where the rule of law and a concern for justice have emerged as predominant traits.

SOCIAL CUSTOMS

Personality Differences

Most Germans tend to be withdrawn, yet formal. Traditionally, the German child is expected to be obedient. He is expected to follow certain norms of behavior. The saying, "Children should be seen and not heard" applies perfectly. As adults, Germans are more comfortable in a reserved and structured situation than Americans. In recent years, however, German children have not been raised with the same restrictions on their behavior as in the past and therefore are less likely to be constrained. This frequently leads to generational conflicts since the older generation cannot understand the liberal ideologies of generation X.

Americans tend to view Germans as cold and emotionless. Germans are not overtly friendly. They do not smile or wave at strangers or even acquaintances. They prefer to wait for others to make the first move. For example, many Americans report that after inviting their neighbors for coffee and cake or a glass of wine they were able to develop friendships.

Some key German characteristics and goals are: achievement, assertiveness, straightforwardness, open and loud speaking, seriousness, success, and tidiness. Virtues in Germany include honesty, thrift, punctuality, thoroughness, and respect for the Ten Commandments. Germans tend to live by the motto, “Ordnung muß sein,” or “order must be," and they pride themselves on their work and resourcefulness. They emphasize individual, democratic rights. Upon unification, East Germans feared their traits of bonds and friendship would be undermined due to western competition. Luckily these traits have been woven into German society.

What Americans may interpret as bad manners can be natural to Germans. For example, whispering in groups is acceptable, yawning and belching is tolerated, and bumping into someone and not apologizing is not considered rude. These are all natural occurrences needing no excuse or apology. When speaking to a German, he may be loud and aggressive. Germans want to be right and often appear more combative in this regard than Americans. They do not tell the white lies like we do for the appearance of politeness or face-saving. Many of the older generation want to "do you one better" to prove they are wiser than you. This is not in a condescending or rude manner, but rather informative. Finally, German humor is more satirical and crass than are American jokes.

Germans pride themselves on the cleanliness of their towns. German cities rarely are marked by hoodlums. Garbage is rarely left in the streets for others to pick up. Similarly, the environment is an important issue to Germans. Recycling has grown to a nationwide scale. The eastern regions are still struggling with factory pollution, though.

Addressing Others

The Germans' formal morning greeting is "Guten Morgen, Herr Schmidt" to a man and "Frau Schmidt" to a woman. "Fräulein" is used with a child or teen. Note that "Fräulein" has a somewhat negative connotation with adults as a result of its use by American G.I.s during World War II. The proper greetings for a guest are "Guten Tag," "Gruß Gott" or, more informally, "Gruß Dich" or "Hallo." There are regional greetings: "Gruß Gott," "Grützi," "Moin Moin," or "Servus," which are generally appropriate throughout Germany. When answering the telephone, use a greeting followed by "Hier ist (name)" then request to speak to the individual. Not specifying the nature of the call can be construed as rude.

"Auf Wiedersehen" is the proper way to say good-bye at all times of day and night. Those generally of the younger generation say "Ciao," which is adopted from the Italian. "Guten Abend" is the greeting for evening hours; "Gute Nacht" is usually used to say goodnight to those staying in the same house. "Tschüß" is a very informal, popular way of saying goodbye and is used among close acquaintances. Salutations and closures should be used at all times, even when entering a random store or public transportation, including elevators, to anyone present.

"Wie geht es Ihnen?" is not used after the initial introduction in the way we might use "How do you do?" but is used to inquire about the well-being of a person whose acquaintance one has already made. ("Sie" refers to the formal usage of "you." The use of lower case "sie" refers to "she" or "they.") One should also note that all nouns are capitalized in German. Pronouns are not capitalized unless it is the polite "Sie" or one speaks in direct reference to the word itself. For example, "Should I use ‘Du’ or ‘Sie’ when referring to your mother?" When addressing animals, close friends, relatives, or children the "Du," or intimate, form is used. Children learn to address their elders with "Sie," reflecting the traditional respect and family hierarchy. Students of all ages are less formal and use "Du" with peers, as do blue-collar workers; on the other hand, white-collar employees normally use "Sie," unless co-workers are close friends. First names are used with "Du" forms, and family names with "Herr" or "Frau" are used with "Sie" forms. Americans should not address a German by his or her first name unless invited to do so.

Du and *Freund* are words less often used than the equivalent American you and friend. They are more likely to indicate a very special relationship, more like the American “close friend.” A friend is someone who requires a lot of your time, interest, and even financial help. Even in peer groups you might have an acquaintance for many years and still not apply the word Freund, but rather *Bekannter*, or acquaintance. There are situations where the Du is used and does not really mean friend, as in groups of former classmates and military buddies; the word Freund does not necessarily fit either.

All German forms of address begin with “Herr” (Mr.), “Frau” (Mrs.), or "Fräulein" (Miss) followed by a title and/or family name: for example, "Herr Doktor Schmidt" (both for medical doctors and academic doctors), or "Frau Professor Müller." An educated German will never introduce himself with his title or rank. If the addressee has a title, it is very important to include it when addressing him or her. Yet, when speaking directly to a person with a title, the family name is often omitted: for example, "Guten Tag, Herr Professor!" When introducing a person with a title to someone else, "Herr" or "Frau" may be dropped when referring to them: for example "Darf ich Ihnen (formal) Professor Schmidt vorstellen?" However, always use a title and surname until otherwise notified, even between adults.

Married women are not referred to by their husband's first and last name as Americans are. Rather than Mrs. John Doe, the preferred form in German is Frau Eva Schmidt. An envelope addressed to both husband and wife should read "Herrn Hermann Schmidt und Frau."

Being a Guest

German hosts and hostesses welcome their guests at the door, shake their hands, and help them remove and hang their wraps. When a guest arrives, whether it is for cocktails, coffee, luncheon, or dinner, he will invariably say upon his arrival, "Thank you for the invitation." Germans are very respectful of courtesies extended to them by friends.

Germans love to debate political issues for hours. If involved in such a debate, do not leave during the discussion, regardless of the time, for this is a sign of disapproval of the company. In public and in private, Germans lecture each other in order to impart knowledge and "facts." Thus, especially with the older generation, and in Berlin and northern Germany, factual, blunt honesty is considered more important than politeness. Americans sometimes interpret this as "bossiness" or "bragging," but it is meant to be informative.

It is polite to phone before visiting a German family since Germans are not as accustomed to dropping in on their friends. Yet, among close friends, traditionally, it is acceptable to drop in during Sunday coffee hour. You should avoid contacting a German family during mealtimes—usually between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m., and 6:00 and 8:00 p.m.

At a small gathering a newcomer should shake hands with all present, saying his full name in addition to any other greeting. Names should be given right away. When leaving, one should shake hands with all present again. In a large gathering it is appropriate to shake hands only with those you met.

Terms of endearment, holding hands, and greeting with a kiss are permissible ways for spouses or partners to show affection for each other in public, but nothing further than this.

Gift Giving

Flowers are the traditional gift of appreciation for an invitation, and in a large party, flowers should be sent in advance. For smaller parties and invitations for coffee, it is permissible to bring flowers along. The size and cost of the arrangement should correspond to the formality of the party. When a couple is invited, the man gives the flowers to the hostess after removing the paper; cellophane is left on. It is best not to select a bouquet of red flowers of any kind, for red symbolizes love. It is also wise to avoid mums, as they are associated with funerals. An odd number of flowers, usually five or seven, is appropriate.

Gift giving is a much enjoyed tradition throughout Germany, gifts often being given for no reason. Homemade presents are especially appreciated. Children receive gifts when visitors come to the house. All gifts are wrapped. Magazine articles teach elaborate wrapping techniques. Even department stores will give gifts to patrons as a token of appreciation of service. Firms often send clients and customers gifts for Christmas or Easter. It is customary in many areas to give the garbage men, concierges, postmen, and newspaper carriers a gift of 5 to 10 Euros at *Silvester*, or New Year's. Baptisms, first communions, confirmations, circumcision rites, and bar mitzvahs are celebrated with a gathering of family and friends, and an appropriate gift should be brought to such functions.

Germans, especially Catholics, celebrate their Saints days in addition to their birthdays. German adults generally celebrate more for each successive birthday than is done in the United States. Some birthdays, such as the 50th and 60th, are very important and are elaborately celebrated. The celebrant often gives parties both at his

place of employment and at his home. Small bouquets are appropriate gifts from colleagues.

The milestone wedding anniversaries—the 25th and the 50th—are also celebrated. The latter is marked not only by a large reception for friends and family but also by an article in the newspaper with photograph, and in smaller towns and cities, by town government recognition.

Gifts are opened in the presence of the donor, prefaced with "May I open this now?" unless others are present who have not brought gifts. It is appropriate to express appreciation for the gift immediately. The taboos on gifts are much the same as ours. There are some traditional gifts for certain occasions, for example, books or wine for the 50th birthday celebration of a man.

A guest should always say "thank you" by telephone or note within one or two days after an invitation and/or gift. If you are the guest of honor, a written note is absolutely required.

Funerals

German funeral procedures are simpler than their American counterparts. The newspaper publishes a death announcement stating general information about the deceased and if public attendance is desired. The family may send out black-bordered cards containing the same information to distant relatives and a wide circle of friends. Depending on family wishes and how well known the deceased person was, the family may receive visits from friends and relatives. If a prominent member of the host government dies, and there is official mourning, call the Protocol Office of the American Embassy or Consulate for advice as to proper procedure, attire, and behavior. When invited to a funeral you should send condolence flowers to the cemetery ahead of time with your name on a card or ribbon. You should also send a letter of condolence written on plain white notepaper to the surviving family. Do not send an American-style card, as they are not considered formal enough. For attendance at the funeral, dark clothing should be worn. Men should also wear a black tie.

Differences in Customs

Men may or may not offer their arm when escorting someone across the street. If you are a woman, do not be surprised if a German woman links arms with you occasionally when walking on the street.

Jay walking is particularly frowned upon. Germans stand dutifully at the crosswalk and wait for the green light before crossing the street. One can usually expect to be scolded if one does not do likewise.

Educated Germans are aware of American customs; therefore, when Americans are present the likely seating will be to the right as the place of honor even though Germans place their guests to the left. Possible discussion topics include job and hobbies; try to avoid political discussions, as heated debates are not appropriate at these gatherings. Germans are usually not very flexible with opinions other than their own. The guest of honor is expected to make brief remarks after the meal to thank the hosts.

Men show respect by removing their hats inside a building or by tipping it to a lady on the street. Men stand when ladies, the elderly, or important men enter the room. Ladies need only stand for an older woman or a very high ranking man or woman. Men shake hands, or at a very formal indoor function may kiss a lady's hand instead of shaking it. Higher ranking people, as well as guests, always enter a house or a room first.

Many of the gestures considered rude in the United States are also considered rude in Germany. While driving you should not tap your head with your forefinger at another driver as this is considered an insult. Although they may not seem overtly friendly, Germans tend to stand close to you when talking. Yet, touching whomever you are speaking to is usually considered rude.

Many personal questions Americans commonly ask, like those concerning one's occupation, spouse, or family, should be left to a later stage of the relationship, so as to avoid being accused of prying. On the other hand, do not be surprised if people ask your *Alter*, or age, even on the first encounter. Personal questions to be avoided include those about marital life, finances, educational backgrounds (especially with older women), religious affiliation, or oftentimes Jewish topics. Questions about World War II are acceptable if they involve personal experiences. Germans are very closed about discussing their personal lives in detail with acquaintances. Relationships develop more slowly in Germany than in America, and questions that Americans often ask each other right away should be delayed.

Protocol

Punctuality is absolutely essential for *every* invitation or business appointment. You should never arrive early for dinner, and no more than 10 minutes late, without offering a good reason or an apology. To be 30 minutes late is socially unacceptable. If you are unavoidably detained, it is best to call so that dinner will not be delayed. A

previous engagement or any reasonable excuse is acceptable when refusing an invitation. After accepting an invitation only sickness or official business are grounds for canceling. The host or hostess should be informed as soon as possible. At official gatherings when the time is listed with the abbreviation c.t. (con tempore), the function begins punctually at 15 minutes after the hour. If the abbreviation s.t. (sine tempore) is given, the function will begin punctually on the hour.

German culture is guided by more detailed customs than in America. They have more elaborate ceremonial rules to follow. For any given social function or business deal, there is a proper protocol to follow. These steps are not difficult, but it is important to follow them sequentially.

Also, when working with the government, proper protocol must be followed. Everything in Germany is regulated, and permission to do anything must be granted. This means meticulous paperwork and signatures for minor requests ranging from registration to bills. To try to avoid the paperwork will set back any hopes of a quick visit to a government office. Try to be calm when dealing with bureaucratic procedures. It will be very frustrating. A common phrase here is "Ich bin nicht dafür zuständig," or "I am not responsible for that," as the government employees send you on your way. You may also hear, "You must speak to my colleague, who is presently unavailable."

German protocol is more formal and conservative than is the American. Meetings are scheduled for the morning. Being late for an appointment shows a lack of discipline, motivation, and reliability. Always shake hands and exchange business cards when greeting associates. Businesses have a concrete hierarchy—seniors and subordinates are very easy to differentiate. Meetings will be held on site. Most are formal: Germans conduct them privately and do not spend time socializing. This illustrates the German business mentality of individualism rather than teamwork. Seriousness is appreciated, frivolity is not. Men should wear conservative, dark suits with a tie. Women should wear conservative suits or appropriate dresses. Women should also realize that German men often will not take an executive woman seriously. Having experts on your team is a wise idea. Germans are impressed with their knowledge and respect their conclusions. Try to speak German as much as possible. This shows a concern for the culture and will leave a positive image. However, most upper-level officials can speak English fluently. Upon the conclusion of the meeting, always shake hands again to finalize all business.

Business deals are worked out over a long period. This is especially difficult for Americans to understand, for U.S. deals are completed within days, while German deals may take months. German business deals are a structured plan with codified

rules and a sequence of steps to achieve the desired goal. A legally binding contract may be one that is sealed simply by a handshake.

Breakfast meetings are becoming popular now. Workers take a coffee break around 9:00 a.m. and a snack break around 3:00 p.m. Lunch is between 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Be sure not to make business calls during these times. Depending on where you are located, lunch meetings may or may not be popular. For example, in Frankfurt they are common but not in Hamburg. Social life and business do not mix well in Germany. Partners in business usually do not spend time together outside the office, so if a party is thrown at a home with colleagues, it is likely to be a formal, elegant dinner.

Shopping

Manners while shopping are similar to those in America, but in smaller shops it is customary for the customer to say "Guten Tag" when entering and "Auf Wiedersehen" or "Danke" when leaving. In a large shop you may ask a salesperson for help, but in an haute couture salon you would normally wait for help from a salesperson. Germans do not browse or touch when shopping, and Americans who are not seriously looking for a particular item may find themselves confronted by the store detective in a large department store or an angry sales clerk in a small store. In grocery stores health regulations prohibit the touching of fruits and vegetables before buying them. Many small shops still do not take credit cards; therefore, it would be wise to carry travelers' checks and cash.

Queuing is not customary in Germany, and shoppers must be aggressive to protect their turn. However, it is important to take turns and let those who waited before you go first. Do not barter with vendors unless you are shopping in a flea market; prices are fixed. You are also expected to provide your own shopping bag to carry your purchases. In some larger stores, however, bags are furnished or the purchases are wrapped. Many shops sell plastic bags for those who have forgotten their own.

Store hours vary in different parts of the country, but in many areas shops are closed for lunch and on Saturday afternoons. Most stores are closed for one hour at lunch. In 1996 the German *Bundestag*, or parliament, extended the open hours for businesses. Stores are allowed to remain open between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on weekdays and until 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Sunday remains a day of rest, but bakers are now allowed to make and sell fresh bread and rolls on Sunday and open as early as 5:30 a.m every day. There are no 24-hour markets, per se, although one can always find items at gas stations around the clock. Nevertheless, shoppers should plan food purchases for evenings, weekends, and holidays around

the German shopping hours. Banking hours are also different from those in the United States. Airports and train stations have much more liberal hours.

Most beauty shops prefer that you make an appointment, but in some small shops it is permissible to walk in without one. You should tip the hairdresser 5–10 percent, if you like what he or she has done. In a large shop the owner is not tipped, but in a small shop, the owner should be. It would not be appropriate to bring your own beauty supplies. Prices are usually posted in the window.

WORK AND FAMILY

Family Life

The basic unit of social organization in Germany is the immediate family. In small towns and villages one may encounter extended families living together insofar as there is enough space to provide housing for all. This may include grandparents, cousins, aunts, or others.

Frequently, newlyweds live with one set of parents. A father who owns land may give it to his son and assist him in building on it. The density of the population and the high price of land make this an attractive offer, and parents can retain influence over their children for a little longer. The independent, nuclear family is becoming more widespread in Germany.

The elderly are treated much as other adults. Old age is accepted as part of the normal development of life. The elderly are respected much more than in the United States. They are greeted first in a group as a sign of respect. People stand as they enter and genuinely are concerned for their welfare. In addition, it is generally expected that those younger offer the elderly their seat on public transportation, if a place is otherwise not to be had.

Career Opportunities

Work is regulated through the *Betriebsrat*, an organization for fair labor. This council must approve any change in a firm's size. Lay offs can be contested here. The Betriebsrat ensures that no one works more than 37 hours per week; hence overtime pay is rare. Disability work is available: one in 16 employees must be disabled or a fine will be imposed on the company.

Only 58 percent of German women are employed outside the home, making up 42 percent of the work force. Although theoretically no occupation is closed to women,

their numbers are greater in certain occupational groups. They frequently take part-time jobs so they can care for children. Women are frequently found in sales and secretarial positions. In May 2000, according to the Statistisches Bundesamt Deutschland, or Germany's Federal Statistical Office, just under one-third of all executives in industry, the service sector, and public administration were female (1.6 million), whereas more than two-thirds (3.5 million) were men. Women are rarely found in the uppermost positions requiring extensive education such as those at top executive levels and board positions in major companies: a mere 3 percent of that work force is female. Three percent of high-ranking professors are women. The women that do hold these positions are not given the responsibilities or respect that a man receives: women are paid two-thirds the salary of men, except in the civil service. A low number of women are found in technical occupations like chemistry or physics. It was only in early 2001 that women were admitted into combat units of the German armed forces for the first time. Some progress has been made in the past couple of decades: From 1986 to 1999 the percentage of women at all management levels rose from 4 percent to 13 percent; and the number of women legislators has been rising consistently, from 9 percent in 1980 to 31.5 percent in 2002. Nevertheless, the status of women's employment in Germany reflects only moderate change since the 1970s.

Homemaking is still considered the preferred, traditional role for most women although many younger women are continuing to work after marriage, and even after having children. The working mother must have help for her household and children since school hours are shorter, and young children are home a greater percentage of the day than in the United States. Elderly women care for children after school as nannies or *Omas* (grandmas) as they are affectionately called. A mother who works out of economic necessity and has no relatives or private help may send her children to a supervised public or private facility during after-school hours.

Children

Children are taught by conceptual methods in the schools and by the exercise of authority and discipline in the home. At home, spanking, chastising, and shaming are used to correct disapproved behavior, and older children face *Stuben-Arrest* (confinement to the room or house) or the curtailment of money. School behavior, now that corporal punishment is illegal, relies on group or parental pressure. German children are not allowed to make nonsense like American children do. It is not uncommon for a teacher to punish an entire class for the actions of one student. In the *Gymnasium*, or preparatory school for university studies, a *Klassenbuch* is kept where the teachers record misbehavior. When a pupil receives a certain number of entries, the parents are notified or the teachers confer on the case. The punishment for not paying attention in class may be writing a technical report about that specific

class. The Gymnasium teachers are more like American college professors in that they conduct courses as lectures, tolerate little misbehavior, and hold students responsibile for their own learning.

There is no set ceremony to mark a child's coming of age. Still, there are informal ways of indicating that a child is considered an adult. At the age of 14, when both Protestant and Catholic children are confirmed, a child may make his own decisions on his religious beliefs and determine his own participation in church life and attendance in the school religion classes. The change from the familiar form of address "Du" to the more formal "Sie" (at about the age of 16) in addressing an adolescent marks in another way the transition from child to adult status. The legal age of adulthood is 18, at which time one acquires the right to vote, power over one's own money, the right to marriage, and the option of higher education.

The family duties of women, whether they work or not, continue to be cooking, cleaning, and raising children. In contrast to American children, German children are not expected to help at home—mothers are supposed to carry out domestic chores. With the increasing number of working mothers, men are beginning to share in some child-care and housekeeping tasks. The father participates more actively in the later, far-reaching decisions about children, such as their education, degree of independence, and the amount of money at their disposal. Traditionally, the husband controls the money in the family. The father is the disciplinarian and sets rules and guidelines unilaterally. However, because the German child spends a great deal of time at home during elementary school years, the mother's guidance is actually more influential.

Many girls still aspire to become wives and mothers, and boys to become providers and fathers. Boys are encouraged to choose a career for which they have abilities; girls are encouraged to choose one requiring a short period of training. This view is beginning to change. The young people in Germany now are a part of a transitional generation. Social reforms are being implemented. Germany seems to be caught in a society similar to our 1960s.

Toys and games for younger children are usually, but not always, depending on the parents, related to gender divisions—dolls, baby carriages, and play kitchens for girls; trucks, trains, and Legos for boys. Boys are encouraged to participate in rough sports—soccer or basketball—while girls usually concentrate on sports such as gymnastics. Swimming, biking, and tennis are popular with both.

Marriage and Divorce

German marriages are made by individual choice, and the expectations of marriage are as varied as those found in the United States. The family of the bride pays for the ceremony. A dowry is not required by law or by general custom, but the bride's education or training is often considered one. As in the United States, the symbols used in the marriage ceremony follow the couple's faith and include a white dress for the bride and the exchange of rings. The wedding band is worn on the left hand during the engagement and switched to the right hand at marriage.

When invited to a wedding it is appropriate to send a gift beforehand or take a gift to the reception (with a card firmly attached to the gift). As in America, some brides register their gift preferences with a local shop. Money is not normally given as a present. If you receive an announcement instead of an invitation, it is acceptable to send just a card of congratulations.

Many engaged couples live together in a kind of trial marriage. Neither polygamy nor concubinage is approved of, but a form of the latter has been inadvertently sanctioned by pension laws and is looked upon sympathetically. Many World War I and II widows live with men they would marry were it not that they would lose their widows' pensions for remarrying. Homosexuality is generally accepted, although attitudes do vary throughout Germany. In 2001 a law was passed that allows homosexuals to "seal" their partnerships at official registries and requires a court decision for a "divorce." It also grants same-sex couples inheritance and health insurance rights on par with married couples.

Divorce has been permitted since July 1, 1977. The grounds for German divorce are fulfilled by proving a shattered relationship as evidenced by the amount of time the couple lived in separation, instead of establishing the guilt of one party. No alimony payments are made if both partners have a good income. Provisions for financial security in old age for both divorced persons are also made under the law.

DAILY LIFE

Housing Size and Style

Because of the high relation of population to land area in Germany, houses and apartments tend to be smaller and closer together than in the United States. It is not

uncommon for a four-member family to live in a two-bedroom apartment. In cities, and in areas heavily damaged during World War II, buildings were quickly erected to house the homeless without regard to aesthetics or city planning. Since the apartments are relatively inexpensive, more money can be spent on elaborate decor. In the country as a whole one finds many regional architectural styles, such as the "Fachwerk," or half-timbered houses, and old farmhouses where the barn and living quarters were built as one unit. Houses can range from very modern to traditional. The latter is covered in intricate woodwork and very geometrical. In old wine-growing regions the storage cellars are built into the hillsides.

Location of a house or an apartment is important for social status, but there is no stark delineation of housing areas reflecting income or status. There are working class districts in the large industrial cities, but they are in no way comparable to the slums or ghettos frequently found in American inner cities.

Germany is rapidly moving toward a uniclass structure, which is reflected in the type of dwellings currently being built. After World War II, the government encouraged the building of private homes by offering favorable tax laws and mortgage loans. The present government policy, however, is to encourage apartment living. It is almost impossible for young couples today to own a house unless they have received an inheritance, are independently wealthy, or have preferred civil service status. Even old houses on the market are expensive, for they are subject to the 14 percent *Mehrwertsteuer*, a value-added tax. These factors, coupled with soaring land prices as well as increasing restrictions on sewage and water rights and prices, have made ownership difficult.

Dress

Textiles, colors, and decorations are generally a matter of taste and cost, and vary as much as they do in the United States. Rather than being identified with any specific social or occupational groups, special clothes or costumes are worn in villages throughout Germany for local festivals. They vary from region to region and according to ethnicity. Germans like to wear costumes for special events like *Karnival* or *Fasching*, the pre-Lenten balls. Traditional garb such as *Lederhosen*, *Schlapphut*, and *Dirndl* is worn only in festivals—not in daily activities.

Dress for weddings, religious events, and formal occasions depends on the customs of the region, but is generally similar to ours. No type of clothing is considered gender taboo. Although there is an increasing casualness in apparel, particularly among the younger generations, there is also a sense of appropriateness. For example, men and women never wear shorts or tennis shoes in cities. Women

frequently wear dresses or skirts, rather than pants suits. Men dress casually with khakis and a tie or a sweater (not jeans).

German attitudes toward the body and clothing are much more liberal than American attitudes. Nudist clubs and camps have gained in popularity. Usually certain areas on the beaches are reserved for nudists (marked F.K.K.—*Freie Körper Kulture*, or "Free Body Culture"), and it is not unusual to see topless women on public beaches.

Meals

Three meals a day are usual, although health authorities are advocating five small meals out of concern for the health and weight of the Germans. Breakfast is usually extremely early, 5:30 a.m., and often the entire family is expected to attend. The main meal is at noon and, for most families, a lighter meal is served in the evening. The school day for most children ends at noon; the children and often the husbands are home for a large midday dinner. This schedule means that a German woman spends the morning preparing the midday meal and is free after 3:00 p.m. when the dishes and children's homework are done. The evening meal is usually served around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. It is frequently cold cuts and cheese on an open-face sandwich. On holidays and Sundays, coffee and cake is often served at 4:00 p.m., with supper being served a bit later, at 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. The coffee invitation is usually formal with elegant cakes to be had. Sample all of the sweets as not to offend the hostess. The Americans' schedule in Germany usually begins much later, which can make it difficult for American and German wives to find convenient times to meet or plan activities together.

Meals to which guests are invited are festive occasions with much talk and conviviality. Formal entertaining at home is not done as frequently as in the United States. In its place are weekend afternoon invitations for coffee and cake, which may continue into the evening with wine and open-faced sandwiches. Wine or schnapps is almost always served; a guest should not partake until the host has raised his glass in a toast of welcome. The host says "Pros(i)t" or "Zum Wohl," all raise their glasses, the host looks each guest in the eye, takes a sip, and then the guests take sips; then the host again looks each guest in the eye before setting his glass down. Germans like to feed their guests well and heartily but are not insulted when a guest indicates he has had enough, as long as proper appreciation is given to the hostess. When offered seconds on food Americans often confuse a German hostess by replying "Danke" ("thank you"); the proper answer is "Bitte"("please"). "No thank you" is "Nein Danke," and "Yes, thank you" is "Ja Bitte" or "Bitte." When serving, a German will say "Bitte schön," which means something like "Please accept this with my pleasure."

An invitation for *Abendbrot* will indicate a more informal and casual finger-food ensemble than for *Abendessen* or dinner. One should note that wine or beer is usually served with Abendessen. It is appropriate for all guests to consume, including children.

Many German specialties are found in the United States and are part of our own cuisine. The *Bratwurst*, or German sausage, is perhaps one of the most well-known examples of this, but in Germany many more varieties and regional kinds of *Wurst* are to be found. Some familiar German dishes include: *Wiener Schnitzel, Roladen, Hühner Frickasse*, and *Spätzle*. In some areas of the country, fish is served at breakfast after a celebration—known as the *Kater* breakfast—to counter the effects of over-indulgence from the previous evening's festivities.

The bread in Germany is outstanding, and every neighborhood has a bakery with freshly baked bread and *Brötchen*, or rolls. The types of breads vary between localities, and certain pastries and cookies are baked for special times of the year like the *Lebkuchen* and *Printzen* at Christmas time.

Wine, champagne, schnapps, or beer are possibly more important than food for ceremonies and festivals. Whether it is an elegant ceremony with champagne and canapés or a beer festival with "Brats" and pork hocks, food and drink go hand in hand. Prestige foods include wild game, salmon, venison, trout, oysters, shrimp, and asparagus.

Etiquette

Eating utensils and style of service vary slightly from American usage. Germans do not switch their knives and forks back and forth between hands as Americans do. Germans eat with the knife in the right hand and the fork in the left, at all times, regardless of dexterity. The fork is usually faced down as well. Germans never eat with their hands. One does not touch food; instead, everything is cut and eaten with silverware, i.e., sandwiches, french fries, fruit, pizza. To begin eating, one should say "Guten Appetit." It is appropriate to rest elbows on the table—in fact, it is rude to leave hands in the lap. To signify completion of the meal one places the knife and fork together, face down, at five o'clock on the plate. If one is not finished or would like more, one places the knife at five o'clock and the fork, face up, at seven o'clock so they cross in the center of the plate.

At restaurants you should raise a hand to catch the eye of the waiter and then call "Herr Ober," or "Kellner" if less formal, or to a waitress, "Fräulein" regardless of her age. One must be careful when ordering and using fingers to show quantity, for the

Germans use the thumb to signify one, and the first finger to signify two. So if you signal for one, be sure to use your thumb otherwise you will receive two.

Dining Out

Dining out has become popular. Germans enjoy Italian, Greek, and Chinese restaurants. Two types of fast food restaurants exist now: *Steh-Imbiss* and *Schnellimbiss*. Both are American equivalents to street-side vendors (but safer). Food selection will vary greatly, depending on region in Germany. Sample the beer of the region. Often it is brewed locally. Wine tasting is also key since it is one of Germany's main exports. A *Kellner* will serve you in any restaurant or pub; therefore, one does not have to fight for a spot at the bar for refills. When entering a restaurant, the woman follows the man so that he can decide if it is to his standards and satisfaction. A service charge is added onto the bill. Any tipping shows that the service was acceptable. Tipping in Germany is much less than in America. At a bar, one should round the bill at least to a higher Euro. In a restaurant, one should leave between five and ten percent.

Restaurants in general cater to adults and are expensive, but, unlike in the United States, small neighborhood restaurants, such as pubs abound, where evenings are spent eating, drinking, playing cards, or just getting together. Often a *Kneipe*, or pub, will serve a regular crowd and have a specific aura—warm, welcoming, and extremely friendly. To some of these one can take young children. Sunday dinner is often eaten at a restaurant with in-laws and family.

A sense of community and pride is manifested even in the institution of the *Stammtisch*, a specific table for the regulars of the Kneipe. The Stammtisch was in earlier times comprised of just men but now includes women; they meet regularly at the same table to discuss a specific topic ranging from politics to practicing English. Stammtisch membership is very prestigious if you sit with the town mayor—only wealthy or old families of the town hold this honor. The women's equivalent, *Kaffeeklatsch*, was prevalent during the early 1920s, but has since lost popularity and usefulness.

German hospitality centers around food and drink. Whether one is invited to a home or sits in a beer tent, the atmosphere is warm and friendly.

Transportation

As soon as a vacation day arrives, Germans tend to evacuate Germany for other European hot spots like Italy, Spain, and Greece. Many German families own a car, or cars. Travel on the *Autobahn*, the national highways, can be very exciting, but it is

also very dangerous since speed limits can be quite high according to American standards. On some stretches of road, there is no speed limit. Sadly though, Germany has some of the biggest and most deadly accidents on the road. To help avoid this, the government has passed a law that a driver with 0.8 "Promille" (80 milliliters of liquor per 100 milliliters of blood) is intoxicated and can be arrested. Hundreds of arrests are made during the holidays. The worst traffic jams have occurred on the Autobahn as well. One important tradition on the Autobahn is the use of flashing headlights to signal another driver to move to another lane. It is still practiced regularly and usually produces immediate results. Cyclists are also a part of traffic. They may use the roads, but not the Autobahn. Germany also has a good public transportation system of trains, buses, taxis, and trams throughout the cities and across the country.

Crime

Most crime is perpetrated for sociopolitical reasons. Neo-Nazis in eastern cities have claimed responsibility for violence against foreign workers. Public objection to these workers has led government to reexamine its asylum policies for third world refugees. Some crimes are affecting the eastern economy; international firms potentially investing in the economy have become aware of the dangers and refused to sign contracts and deals.

It is uncommon to see beggars in Germany, and should one come to the door, care should be exercised. The government provides extensive social services, and there is no need to give money. If someone is collecting money for a specific cause, you may ask them to show you the identity card issued to approved organizations. Then it is suggested that you send money if you wish.

CLASS STRUCTURE

Class structure is the same in Germany as in America, except remnants of the historical aristocracy still play a role in social etiquette. During the Weimar Republic, a law was passed that gave aristocrats (who had lost all special rights and privileges after World War I), the right to make their titles part of their legal names. Nobility as such has no influence, although large land holdings and wealth inherited over many generations can give aristocrats in some areas a degree of influence. As in other European countries where historical roots, century-old buildings, and traditions are very much a part of everyday life, family history is important in Germany. However, a much larger percentage of Germans consider themselves blue-collar workers than aristocratic.

Individual achievement generally determines social status. Although money is an important status-building factor, education also plays an important role. Wealth is not a prerequisite for public office. In many subtle ways, birth does predetermine status, but it is possible to move up and down the social scale depending primarily on education and training.

In many rural areas, attachment to the land is very strong and parents reject higher education, thereby binding their children to traditional living patterns. In the poorer families, education is not emphasized as much as keeping the family business prosperous. Family businesses are frequently passed to the eldest son before the death of the father. Class structure within Germany's rural areas is based on land ownership. The church's influence is still strong in these areas, with much socializing centering on church-related activities.

Wealth, education, and political influence have created an identifiable upper class with an aura similar to that of the United States. The pulp magazines write about the aristocrats and wealthy families comprising high society, in the way movie stars are written up in the United States. Heredity, money, land, education, and political influence all contribute to social status, with no single factor dominating.

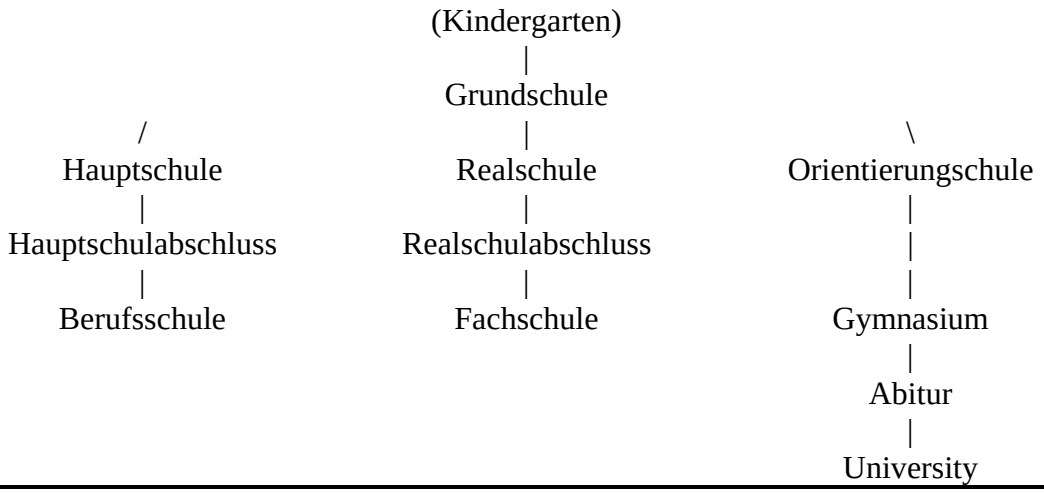
SCHOOL SYSTEM

The German school system is similar to the American system with some differences. All schooling is paid for by the state. No uniforms are required in schools. Kindergarten is optional. On the first day of classes each school year, the children receive a *Tute* from their parents at school. It is a funnel-shaped gift of candy and small school supplies. This is a special way to start off the school year.

Kids start their education at age six in the *Grundschule*. After fourth grade, children can attend three separate kinds of schools depending on intelligence and skill. About a third of the students select the *Hauptschule*. This school is designed to teach how to work. It is often comprised of minorities, especially Turks. Usually there is an apprenticeship involved. They can then attend a vocational school called *Berufsschule*. Others will go to the *Realschule*, where they learn more entrepreneurial skills. It is similar to an American high school. Upon graduation these students are qualified to continue education in a *Fachschule*, which is a technical school, or continue to upper secondary schooling. The Realschule and Hauptschule do not have a final exam at the end, but rather a diploma called the *Realschul-* or *Hauptschulabschluss*.

German states have an *Orientierungsstufe* (orientation level) in some of the *Gymnasium*s, covering fifth and sixth grades. This orientation helps prepares children for the rigorous demands of the Gymnasium, which lasts nine years. Students here will have up to three *Leistungsfächer* (majors) on which they will focus. When this study is completed a student writes the *Abitur*, which allows him or her to attend university, if s/he passes. Due to the extremely competitive market for university degrees and the difficulty of the Abitur, most German students cannot attend college. University attendance is about evenly split between the genders. Men usually complete university studies around age 30, while women complete their studies around 28 (Men have a ten month compulsory military tour of duty). The German educational system is under state control (as opposed to federal regulation), so the requirements for each school may differ for graduation and the topics learned may also differ greatly.

SCHOOL STRUCTURE



Parents play an important role in deciding which kind of school their children will attend. Even if a teacher recommends that a child not be sent to the Gymnasium, the parents can insist that their child attend—at least until s/he fails the same grade twice. Children may repeat each grade once. On the other hand, although many children may be deemed qualified to attend the Gymnasium, many lower class families, mainly unskilled workers, do not want higher education for their children, who would then be superior to their parents. During the last number of years this attitude has diminished. A double standard exists in the education of girls: to succeed in a male-dominated society she should pursue a college diploma; however, if a girl is not earning a salary by age 20, she is frowned upon—boys are not. Progress throughout schooling is measured upon conclusion of the school year.

POLITICAL PATTERNS

Decentralization

Political power in Germany is housed in the traditional institutions of government and is strengthened internationally by the country's economic power. Power is distributed within the 17 state governments through a federal system. Germany engages in dual direct elections with a proportional representation system. This allows all parties the opportunity for seats and also allows for stable coalitions. Since 1949, this system has consistently worked.

Germany is the most decentralized government in Europe: it is broken down into federal, state, and local levels. The federal system focuses on taxation. Federal and state governments cooperate on issues like civil and criminal law, labor laws, and economic policy. States' rights carry more weight than in the United States. For example, states have exclusive jurisdiction over education and public safety. The welfare state of Germany is the biggest concern of the governments. This encompasses social spending like social security and health insurance; unemployment and accident insurance; and social, educational, and housing assistance. Local German governments have considerable influence in the federal parliament. The local systems pass legislation on provincial issues that affect just that area.

Germany has a strong, collective cabinet, and therefore has a strong Executive. The federal President, who is chosen by a special electoral assembly every five years, holds a ceremonial role. The federal President receives visiting heads of state. The Chancellor, who is appointed by the President, controls the country as chief executive. He appoints cabinet ministers, organizes the government, and sets policy. The "Bundestag," or lower house of parliament, must approve the Chancellor and his cabinet. Foreign policy formulation is the responsibility of the Chancellor and the Foreign Minister. The Cabinet of Ministers represents the variety of political and economic issues of the states, and the ministers share control of the government with the Chancellor. For example, the Foreign Ministry is responsible for international representation and selects the German diplomats who will be sent abroad to embassies, conferences, and special negotiations.

States are represented on the federal level in the *Bundesrat*, or upper house of parliament. State delegations to the Bundesrat are members of their state cabinet.

The state governments appoint them, and they hold state office as well. They act in the interest of their region of Germany. The Bundestag is elected by the people for four-year terms and is based on a complicated system of proportional representation. Parliament focuses on government spending and has veto power over the Cabinet.

Political Parties

Germany has more influential political parties than the United States. The Social Democratic Party (SPD), one of the oldest organized political parties in the world, narrowly emerged as the winner, with 38.5 percent of the vote, in the September 2002 elections. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder has led the government since the 1998 elections in coalition with the Greens. The SPD stresses social welfare programs and strongly supports German ties with NATO. Most of the support of the SPD comes from industrialized zones and big cities. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) operates in alliance with a related Bavarian party, the Christian Social Union (CSU). Although each party maintains its own structure, the two form a common caucus in the Bundestag and do not run opposing campaigns. The CDU/CSU is comprised of Catholics, Protestants, rural interests, and members of all economic classes. The coalition is generally conservative on economic and social policy. The Greens emphasize environmental, ecological, and peace issues and maintain a strong base that is anti-NATO, anti-nuclear, and anti-military. In the December 1990 all-German elections, the Greens merged with the Eastern German Alliance '90, a loose grouping of civil rights activists with diverse political views. In 1998 the Greens joined a federal government for the first time, forming a coalition with the SPD. In the September 2002 elections they won 8.6 percent of the vote and remain in coalition with the SPD.

The Federal Democratic Party (FDP) represents the liberal, middle, and upper class Protestants. They tend to emphasize redistributive taxation and post-cold war collective security. Until 1998, the party had participated in all but three postwar federal governments. The Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) was established in December 1989 as the successor party to the Socialist Unity Party (SED) (the communist party of East Germany). The PDS currently holds less than 5 percent of the votes; however, they have two constituency seats in the Bundestag. Some were concerned that the PDS would resume a push for communism after reunification; this has not occurred. A variety of other minor parties won a cumulative total of 3 percent of the vote in the September 2002 elections. Although rightwing parties exist and may be active locally, they remained fragmented and ineffectual at the national level. The main issues of debate in Germany remain integration into Europe, German military peacekeeping or collective security efforts, and the economy.

On November 9, 1989, the border separating East and West Germany was effectively opened. The Hungarian government had opened its borders with Austria in May, and many East Germans had used that route to escape to the West, beginning a course of events that eventually led to the fall of the Berlin Wall. On November 28, 1989, a plan to integrate both Germanys was introduced. It called for elections in East Germany and integration of the economies. The SED party was removed from unilateral power, and the East German governing bodies resigned. Then various political parties were established. Free elections were set for March 18, 1990. Helmut Kohl, who wanted membership in NATO, rejected Communist Chancellor Hans Modrow's proposition for neutral Germany. Lothar de Maiziere, a CDU member, was elected in East Germany to lead the unification process.

Mistakes Made in Unification

In hindsight, many mistakes were made throughout unification. First, the West was too rigid and uncompromising regarding economic policy that would hurt eastern German markets. Second, eastern Germany had poor leadership throughout the political transition from communism to democracy. Bonn had no eastern representatives in government either. Third, the *Treuhandanstalt* was ineffective and unfair to the rightful owners of property seized by the communist government. Property was taken without proper payments for the land. Reimbursements of a mere 20 percent of market value were finally paid only in the mid-1990s. Most of the property was sold immediately, which hurt the economy and inhibited investments. Germany may need to redesign its political structure to make federalism more flexible and build a consensus including all states fairly.

Many West Germans think that the reunification process was a disaster. They are bitter about the way the joining of the two nations was organized. The German *Grundgesetz* (its constitution, known as the Basic Law) states that the German people are called up to work out and define a new constitution upon the unification of East and West. This is what the ruling conservative parties wanted to avoid, at any rate and cost. They would not allow any discussion since they had a ruling majority and could override any suggestions from other parties. In the end they accepted joining the Grundgesetz only. The *Ossis*, or former East Germans, are bitter too, for they now feel oppressed.

Media

The press (magazines and newspapers), radio, and TV all provide reliable information to the average citizen. The press is privately owned; the radio and TV are state controlled (but not centralized). Both the private and state-controlled media

have access to domestic and foreign information and other media sources. The biggest German radio and television station is *Westdeutscher Rundfunk*, or WDR.

ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS

Realizations

Although the thrill of reunification still lingers, more than 10 years later this drastic change in lifestyle—political, social, and economic—still keeps Germany in a kind of limbo. The excitement of bringing a nation together after 40 years of armed separation versus the turmoil and uncertainty left behind reduced Germany to a confused state, from which it is still recovering. The intention of unifying Germany was to have a stable nation to guide Europe through economic and political hardships and lead the path toward European integration. Germany has become more interventionist. It has taken on this role of leadership, but hesitantly. The leaders are strong and unchallenged. Adjustment takes a long time, however. If the downsizing and condensing continues, the economic upheaval will subside, and production will resume on a grand scale; however, the government, as uneasy as it is, is, needs to support this action. Germany's primary economic strengths are its stability and continuity.

Reunification, although desired by both Germanys, made the people realize they were completely different. Eastern Germans lost their job market and realized the poor quality of their products. More than three million lost their jobs: unemployment was as high as 35 percent. Jurgen Kocka, a history professor in Berlin says, "The East German birth rate has fallen by 60 percent and the marriage rate by 65 percent." Not since World War II has it been so bad. The former East Germany is transitioning from an agricultural to an industrial society. Productivity was at 60 percent. An industrial collapse dropped output by 65 percent. This resulted in eastern Germans feeling like second-class citizens and harboring resentment toward the western German. East Germany was an economic disaster before reunification, so the West has been injecting great funds into the economy. The West has so far invested $100 billion per year to sustain 16 million easterners. The economy of eastern Germany is now one of the fastest growing economies in the European Union. However, the typical eastern worker receives only 76 percent of the pay of a western worker. Being one of the world's most industrialized nations, West Germany retains an excellent reputation for quality and production. Western Germans, however, feel bitterness toward the eastern Germans because they have paid the bills for East Germany to modernize.

Not only are there mixed feelings between the two formerly separate countries about unification, but there were concerns raised by political factions as well. The left wishes to combine ideologies of socialism and capitalism into a new democracy. The right wishes to focus on foreign policy as a unified republic. Moderates wish to use this opportunity to reduce the influence of unions while others wish to form more political parties and restructure German politics. The changes actually implemented as of now are minute. Economic advisors fear the inflexibility for reform will cause great trouble.

Improvements

On the other hand, there are many signs of improvements made through the unification of the two German nations. First, the economy is on an upswing. The GDP is expected to grow 2–3 percent through 2002. Second, reorganization is taking place. The companies and firms are adjusting to the economic, political, and social changes incurred through unification. Labor costs are falling while productivity is rising, and the economy is stable. Third, competition on a global scale is increasing. Fourth, inflation is low. Prices rose 2.5 percent in 2002. In addition, eastern Germany now has the capacity to pay its own taxes. Finally, social spending has been cut. It was at 52 percent but now is about 48 percent. The first targets to be cut will be subsidies to lax industries. Clearly, the German economy is flexible enough to deal well with the business cycle and participate in global competition.

German workers participate in what is called *Mitbestimmung*, or codetermination, which allows them to be involved in the direction of their company. Unions are responsible for satisfying their members and balancing the interest of the industry. By law, a union must have one-half of the seats on a governing board and all of the seats on a workers' council. These two organizations are the decision makers for a company. German firms are modeled after the parliamentary democracy: councils, experts, and unions making decisions for the good of all.

Introduction of the Euro

In January 1999 the European Monetary Union adopted the Euro as the new single currency for its members, of which Germany is one. On January 1, 2002, Germany, along with the other 11 countries, officially introduced the Euro banknotes and coins as legal tender. Within two months, the Deutsche Mark all but disappeared—by March 1, shops no longer accepted the old money. The Deutsche Mark was a symbol of national identity since its introduction in West Germany following World War II. Nevertheless, Germans have embraced the Euro with enthusiasm.

Banks

The banks throughout Germany play a much more involved role in business than do American banks. Often they are directly involved in corporations and hold seats on their boards. Most banks support a firm for a long period of time, a concept known as "relationship banking." At the same time, neither banks nor government moderate to prevent bankruptcy in any institutions. Banks are becoming more involved in Eastern Europe's economic recovery. The *Bundesbank,* or central bank, handles all monetary policy as an independent central bank.

EASTERN ISSUES

East Germany has made significant progress since communist rule. Since reunification, most states have increased their standard of living. For example, Berlin and Leipzig are major metropolises with outstanding business and global respect. Thuringia is benefiting due to its rich historical culture and beauty. Eisenach is growing with excellent automobile production. Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania is the slowest of the eastern states to develop since its economy is based on agriculture, fishing, and shipbuilding.

Socioeconomic concerns have risen since reunification, which has left serious differences among the supposedly united Germans. Raising the eastern German standard of living to that of the western is very difficult since the industry has been extremely inefficient, the infrastructure decrepit, and property ownership unclear. This is a unique problem of eastern Germany; the Treuhandanstalt was responsible for selling 13,000 state-owned organizations to participate in the free-market economy. This was done to increase the job market, not to make money for the government. Unemployment in the east is as high as 18 percent in some states, whereas in the west it is over 9 percent. The four million unemployed must be cared for, especially now that social welfare programs have been reduced. This taxes the eastern Germans because, under the communist regime, those who could not work were supported by society, a crutch that has now been removed. The former government of East Germany provided work for all citizens which now, under unification, is no longer the case. As a result, Germany's total world export market share has fallen to 9 percemt, at the bottom of the seven most industrialized nations. Not only is unemployment high, but German taxes are among the highest in the world and are expected to continue to rise.

Earlier, the Ossis did not have to pay taxes, for which the businesses of East Germany were responsible. People were not poor, but they felt poor because they

could watch western TV commercials and believed that the *Wessis* (West Germans) had everything they ever desired. Although the Ossis earned little money, everything was cheap and in short supply. Therefore, their bank accounts were relatively large. When East and West were united, their bank accounts were converted one for one, up to a total of DM 20,000 for each person. Even a newborn child could convert DM 20,000. So, there was money galore, which went into buying cars and expensive trips. Statistics showed that 97 of 100 easterners owned cars while 96 of 100 westerners did. It was short-lived happiness, though. Confronted with the economic system, masses of people lost their jobs. All attempts by the government and communities to reduce the economic crash down to only a hard landing failed. Now the Ossis blame the Wessis.

MINORITY GUEST WORKERS

Gastarbeiter, or immigrant workers, who come mainly from Mediterranean countries to work in Germany, have low social standing. Immigrants are 8.5 percent of the German population. Officially there is no racial or religious prejudice, but there have been violent movements and uprisings against the Gastarbeiter. This issue has grown significantly since reunification. Predominantly Turkish, Islamic, and African immigrants are the targets of aggression. Not only do these workers look different, but they also dress differently, observe different customs and holidays, eat different food, and speak different languages. Analysts believe that the Wessi frustration and resentment lies in the large influx of migrant workers and Ossis into the west to search for jobs. The feeling is that these workers take western money and jobs and return nothing to the economy, causing, for example, a recession in 1991–92. Ten years later, in 2002, the economy is again in recession. Due to this recession, the welfare state has been growing hastily. Welfare benefits seem ridiculously high compared to American standards. For example, a two-child family can receive up to 71 percent of the unemployed worker's full salary.

MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The federal government may opt for membership in any kind of multinational or international institution that is consistent with German policy. Germany stresses international cooperation to prove itself reliable and stable. While emphasizing internationalism, Germany values the bonds with Western nations. It is a member of the EU, NATO, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), all of which promote economic and military stabilization. Germany is participating in international conferences within the framework of the UN (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Law of the Sea (LOS),

Multilateral Trade Negotiations (MTN), etc.) to see its interests upheld. Germany has also been a leader in the European integration process; on the military front is wholeheartedly supports the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Most importantly, Germany has made peaceful, binding treaties with its neighbors to confirm support and cooperation on borders, economic policies, alliances, and military control. Germany has given economic relief to Russia, Yugoslavia, and France. For many years, military assistance beyond its borders was forbidden. However, its military has since served in peacekeeping roles in Kosovo and was active in Afghanistan beginning in 2002.

RELIGION AND HOLIDAYS

Religion

According to the latest census guide, 23 percent of the German population are religiously unaffiliated, 34 percent Roman Catholic, and 38 percent Protestant. Protestants dominate in most of northern Germany, while Catholics tend to dominate in part of the Rhineland and southern Germany. Catholics gain in recognition because they are more likely to be active politically. The Lutheran and Evangelical Churches compose the *Evangelische Landkirche*. Four minor religious groups include the *Freie Kirche* (Baptists), Methodists, and Jehovah's Witnesses, all supported by voluntary, tax-exempted contributions. The Catholic Church and the Evangelische Landkirche receive their money from members of their denomination who pay an additional entrance tax rated at 8–10 percent of their income. This church tax, which is collected through the Finance Department at the same time income tax is paid, is turned directly over to the church administrations. One can petition to receive some tax moneys back if one worked overtime. No one questions the turnover from state to local church. The money is used not only for church maintenance and construction, salaries of the clergy and religious services, but also for operation of a host of social institutions such as hospitals, nursing homes, kindergartens, and schools. However, church membership has been extremely low since unification.

Church in Community

Many social institutions and rites are tied to the church and are state related. For instance, baptism, confirmation, marriage, funeral services, and hospitals are part of this structure. At times it can be difficult to manage in German society without a religious connection. The law requires a marriage ceremony at the *Standesamt*, or state office, while the church service is optional. However, to use the church's facilities for any ceremony, one must have paid the tithe.

Unlike other European countries there is little anti-clericalism in Germany, and both of the major political parties have sought rapprochement with the two major religious communities. Religion is taught in the schools as a graded course. After the age of 14 a child may him or herself elect not to take religion. There are many church holidays that are also state holidays; many are more secular than religious in nature.

Religion is very institutionalized. A priest has defined functions within the parish. He must baptize, confirm, or marry any parishioner on request and conduct funeral services; he teaches religion in the public or church schools, makes hospital visits, and visits older parishioners on “special” birthdays (60th, 70th, 80th). Infants are baptized and given godparents to watch over them and their Christian upbringing. Theological training is academic, not practical. The future priest or pastor is a scholar with a degree in theology and theoretical studies. Churches usually have visiting nurses on staff and operate libraries, family centers, and recreational activities. Churches take up collections, usually for a specific and different cause every Sunday (youth work, world hunger, or missions, for example).

There is the *Oberkirchenrat,*or church administration, that assigns priests and performs other administrative duties within the Catholic Church. The synod elects the bishop in the Protestant Church, who directs both the administrative and religious affairs of the Church.

Basically religious places, objects, and writings are the same as in other Christian countries: specific places associated with the history of Christianity in Germany have religious or sacred value. There is tolerance for minority religions; educational activities of minority religions are permitted.

Holidays

Summer holidays are on a rotation system in Germany; this avoids constant traffic. Each *Land* (state) has about six weeks of individual vacation rotating from mid-June to mid-September. There are many religious events and festivals celebrated that have or once had religious significance. The predominantly Catholic *Länder* (states) have more public holidays than do the Protestant regions. They are more in evidence in Germany because many religious holidays are also legal holidays.

All states celebrate a few holidays together. For example: *Karfreitag* (Good Friday), Easter, May Day, Ascension Day, *Pfingstmontag* (Pentecost), German Unity Day, Day of Repentance, and Christmas. Specific states celebrate Corpus Christi, St. Mary's Ascension Day, Reformation Day, and All Saints Day. Most holidays began

with a religious emphasis; however, now the holidays are a reason to leave work for a vacation in neighboring countries.

Karnival/Fasching: *Karnival*, or *Fasching*, is an official event only in predominantly Catholics states. These former pagan rites of spring now represent a last fling before fasting begins at Lent. Whereas Fasching places more emphasis on balls and costume parties and is more similar to American Halloween, Karnival has taken on a touch of political satire in many areas, since the *Narrenkappe*, or fool's cap, has long granted special privileges of free speech under monarchies or foreign occupations.

St. Martins Tag: Another festival in predominantly Catholic areas is *St. Martins Tag*, taking place around November 10th. A harvest festival in origin, it is traditional to eat *Martinsgans*, or roast goose. Children go from house to house singing and begging for sweets. Schools and towns organize processions, with St. Martin riding his white steed to a huge bonfire at some central point in town. The children make beautiful crêpe paper lanterns illuminated by candles. *Wechmänner* (thick sweet rolls shaped like gingerbread men) are given to the children by parents.

Fairs, Festivals: On various special holidays throughout the year, many towns have a type of fair that originated around the old churches as pilgrims came for the holidays of patron saints, for harvest festivals, or tithing to feudal lords who were nobles of the church in many cases. The major festivals usually occur once a season. Today's *Christkindlmarkt*, *Oktoberfest*, *Pützchensmarkt*, and all local *Kirmes* events originated in a similar way and usually begin with religious services, even though they are now folk festivals with noisy games and amusements.

Labor Day: Although May 1 is Germany's Labor Day and not a religious festival, in the Rhineland, Saar, and Palatinate many rural areas have *Jungesellenvereine* (bachelors' clubs) and *Schützenvereine* (hunting clubs under the patronage of St. Sebastian), which are affiliated with churches, and which have customs that spring from old religious traditions. On the evenings before May 1, young birches are cut and placed before the houses of unmarried young women. Many of these groups traditionally auction off virgins to young men—in a chivalrous spirit. The young man must visit the girl he has won once a week, bring her flowers, and in some cases may be obliged to take her and her mother dancing. The bids are quoted in Euros, but actually paid in coins. The young woman who receives the highest bid is crowned May Queen.

Walpurgisnacht: The last night of April is *Walpurgisnacht*, a night for mischief. The events that transpire are not intended to be evil or cruel, but rather funny and minor. Cars and items left outside are subject to pranks, such as broken antennae. However,

in recent years this tradition is being de-emphasized due to the maliciousness and cruel pranks that can take place.

When the roof braces of a new building are in place, a special ceremony takes place at which workers, owners, architects, and friends participate. A tree or large wreath is attached to the building. Both tree and wreath are old fertility symbols, which have come to symbolize life and happiness. The extent of the festivities includes at least beer and a simple buffet. At a house warming, the owners of a new home are given tiny packets of bread and salt—the basics of life.

Good Luck Rituals

Good luck rituals like knocking on wood or spitting over the shoulder are sometimes practiced. People wish each other good luck by saying, "Hals und Beinbruch," which means "Break a leg and neck." Good luck is assured by giving someone a small marzipan pig, a *Glückspilz* (chocolate toadstool), a four-leaf clover, a chimney sweep miniature, or a *Glückskäfer* (beetle).

The fairy tales of the Grimm brothers, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Wilhelm Hauff have almost all attained a firm place in international literature so that it is easy for any interested reader to find English copies of their work. The anonymous "Niebelungenlied," which served as a basis for Richard Wagner's "Ring" opera, incorporates mythical and historical figures from Europe, since it was composed of elements from several sagas and reached its final form during the Middle Ages when boundaries and alliances were constantly changing and empires were truly international.

Etiquette

On the religious holidays that coincide with family celebrations it is never appropriate to call or visit German friends unless invited to do so. These holidays are intended strictly as family celebrations, not to be extended to guests. The celebration of Christmas begins on Christmas Eve with the appearance of the decorated tree, the exchange of gifts, and special foods and cookies. One of the traditional German ceremonies at Christmas is to light candles, rather than lights, on the tree. Increasing numbers of Germans are abandoning traditional celebrations during the longer holidays in order to travel.

Symbolic Figures

The sandman, easter bunny, and good fairy are as familiar to German children as to American. Only the symbolic figures of Christmas vary greatly in each German

region. Especially following World War II, when there was a great influx of refugees from East Germany and of persons of German heritage from Eastern Europe who were expelled after the war, traditions became very flexible. Thus gifts may be brought at Christmas by the *Christkind* (the Christ child) or the *Weihnachts-Engel* (Christmas angel), originally only a Catholic tradition, or by the *Weihnachtsmann* (Protestant and German Christmas Man), who looks like a thin Santa Claus. Note that gifts are opened late afternoon on Christmas Eve.

On December 6 all children look forward to *St. Nickolaus*, who appears to Catholic children in bishop's robes and to Protestant children looking like an impish Santa, or as a hermit wearing fur robes or a lambskin vest. Many times he is accompanied by *Hans Muff, Knecht Ruprecht,* or *Der Schwartze Piet*, incorporating old symbols of evil and darkness while sometimes acting as Nikolaus' servant. He threatens to grab bad children and stuff them into his sack. Children place their shoes outside the front door of their home for St. Nikolaus to fill with treats. They receive either a piece of coal or sweets, depending on the year's behavior that has been recorded in a golden book. Despite the threats, every child receives a rod covered with sweets, or an extra sack with sweets, nuts, and apples. These fruits and cookies are replete with Christian symbolism, as are the Christmas tree and its various decorations. The *Nikolausrute* was originally not a rod or switch to symbolize punishment, but indicated renewed life, developing from the old Germanic veneration of trees as the home of gods into symbols of rebirth and the cross of Christ.

ARTS

Outlets for artistic expression in Germany are the same as those found in the United States and in other western countries—ballet, opera, theater, art galleries. All are highly esteemed. Symphonies, opera, ballet, and choruses are supported by the state. Government and other sources subsidize German arts, and even in small towns there are likely to be performances and exhibitions. The arts are generally more lively and available in Germany than in the United States.

Schooling

Although Germany has many professional artists, very few are able to make a living solely from the sale of their works. As in most western countries, artists teach or hold other jobs as well. Art schools are of two camps: the *Kunsthochschule*, which is a professional art school emphasizing drawing, painting, and sculpture, and requiring that its students have an Abitur or graduation from a Gymnasium; or the *Werkschule* that emphasizes arts and crafts, and rather than an Abitur, students must present a portfolio and pass an entrance examination.

Art

In a German home, one is likely to see old porcelain and antique furniture that has been handed down in the family. On another level of taste, figures of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, among other characters, are popular garden sculptures.

Museum collections are also similar to those found in the United States; however, there are more of them because many private collections belonging to nobility have been opened to the public. Many of Germany's larger city and state museums originated from private collections of the nobility.

Music

Germans love music more than the visual arts, and concerts abound even in the smallest towns. Both professional musicians and local groups perform. Pre-school music training is often available to children. Families or groups of friends often sing or play chamber music together. There have been many famous German composers—Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, Mozart, and Wagner among them. Among the contemporary composers the best known are Karl-Heinz Stockhausen, Carl Orff, and Hans-Werner Henze. Frequently free concerts will be held in a local park or in the *Marktplatz* (Town Square).

Germans have songs for every occasion. They will sing as it rains, sing as it snows, sing as the sun goes down. One of the more famous songs is the Christmas carol, "Stille Nacht" (Silent Night). Almost as numerous are drinking songs, and those sung for the Carnival season; Germans can find a song in anything. There are many catchy children's songs and German folk songs.

Theater

Theater is also popular, even in smaller hamlets, and both classical and contemporary plays are performed. Important modern German playwrights include Berthold Brecht, Rolf Hochhuth, and Peter Weiss. Cabaret theater, with its political satire, is popular and frequently appears on television. During the Christmas season many children's theaters give special programs. A New Years' performance of Strauss' *Fledermaus* is traditional.

At the theater the patron seats himself, but ushers generally provide directions at the doorway and sell programs. It is not necessary to tip an usher. When entering your row, face each person you pass and say "Entschuldigung." Unless the performance is really miserable, Germans do not hiss or whistle—(it is a calculated impoliteness in

which Americans should not indulge)—and "Bravo" is only occasionally heard. At the theater clapping shows appreciation; at a lecture rapping on the desk indicates approval. In most public halls coats are left at the *Garderobe*, or coatroom. Some tickets include the price of checking a coat.

Dance

Dance is also popular. Large cities such as Munich, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Hamburg, and Berlin have ballet companies of high standards. In the villages, especially in Bavaria, folk dancing is very popular and may be seen at special celebrations.

VALUE SYSTEM

Lifestyles

Germany's two major religious groups have a definite split in attitude, with the Protestants being inclined to hold a serious view of life and the Catholics tending to see life as a source of enjoyment. Both groups take work, play, and life in general quite seriously. Time set aside for play is the same as in America, but play in Germany is more organized. Associations exist for walking, hunting, fishing, sports, sailing, swimming, and almost all other activities. Favorite pastimes are hiking or climbing the Alps in the South or bike riding along the Danube.

Since Germany has always been a center of conflict and war, the German people have a great awareness of death, mortality, and suffering. They tend to enjoy the moment and celebrate life's special events more than Americans. Whereas Americans are inclined to see life as an upward movement with things getting better and better, Germans are more likely to see life as an eternal alternating of good and bad seasons. This is a very Kafka-esque view of life.

Characteristics of Typical Germans

Competitiveness is the rule in school, business, universities, and professions. The bureaucracy is also very competitive. Reaching the top has become more difficult since younger men rose as a result of the postwar's skewed generation. Every worker still has the government-provided economic floor under him, which means that he does not have to be as concerned with personal financial security as an American of the same age and economic position does.

There is a new movement toward cooperativeness, though, perhaps as a result of the nuclear family beginning to replace the extended family. This movement includes neighborhood efforts to establish cooperative kindergartens, better public bus service, and improved neighborhood streets. Despite this cooperative trend, there is nothing on the horizon like the American civic organization. The German trend is more theoretical—more oriented toward writing and petitioning than toward action.

Germans have a great sense of community, which manifests itself in several unrelated ways. For example, labor and management have been able to work together to achieve better industrial performance. The German worker identifies with his place of work, which contributes to his sense of community. In small towns, there is strong local pride for the community. In working class neighborhoods in the large cities, the sense of community shows itself in a 90 percent voter turnout. Voters feel a duty to their communities.

Work

Americans and Germans believe one's destiny is controlled by one's actions, but the German would be more likely to recognize impersonal forces. The German is more likely than the American to know the limits of personal achievement or success, but within those limits he exercises his ambitions to achieve his goals. He may expect setbacks, while Americans may be surprised by them. Society is more structured so that the individual does not feel as pushed to succeed. For example, an injured carpenter in the United States might find substitute work at the lumber yard filling wood orders, while in Germany he would not have the same opportunity to move to a related work area since there is less lateral movement within the work force. The structure of society prevents lateral movement in virtually all cases.

Sensitivities

Since World War II, the right to life has been made a part of the German constitution. This causes difficulty for those women's groups advocating abortion. There has been no capital punishment since the last war. Germany must take special caution when dealing with threatening situations, for their history precedes them greatly. The population growth rate has recently been rising by only .2 percent each year, so Germany must be careful of the decline in population.

World War II caused an anti-hero attitude to develop, which continues today. Traditionally, though, Germany has had many heroes—often related to local or church history. There are about 25,000 castles and ruins in Germany and each have a "local" hero whose legend is taught to schoolchildren. Because Germany became a nation only about 100 years ago, there are more national heroes from the world of

the arts than from politics—Goethe, Schiller, and Beethoven, among them. Some current idols in German society are John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Karl Marx, Willy Brandt, Franz Beckenbauer in soccer, the royal houses of Europe, the Shah of Iran's wife and the Swedish queen (Cinderella-story types), and Anneliese Rothenberger.

CONCLUSION

Americans who live in Germany today can expect to have a challenging and satisfying experience. Although many aspects of German society and culture will be reminiscent of home, the country's outstanding differences will be discerned quickly, facilitating one's discovery of the new culture. Germany's long and notable history, its sustained excellence in the arts, its current position of leadership in the economic and political world, and its ideal location for travel, make it among the most inviting nations a visitor can hope to explore.

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